FATHER TAYLOR

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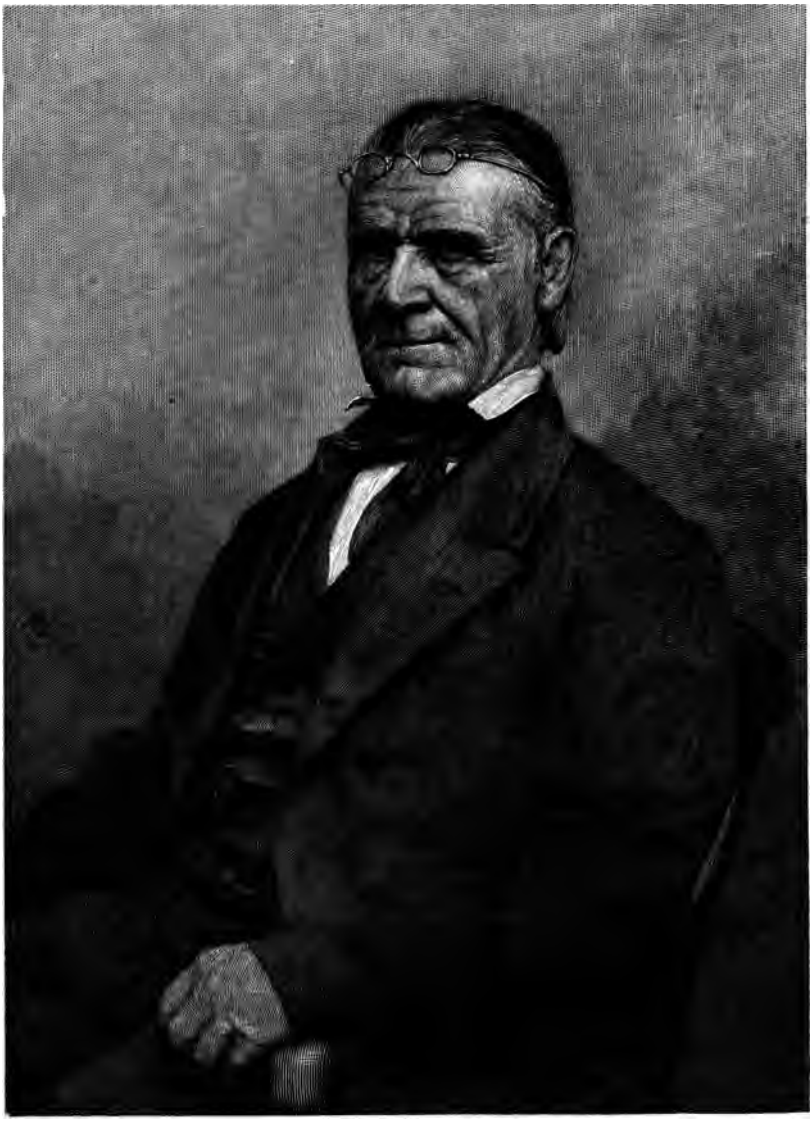

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EDWARD THOMPSON TAYLOR.

"Father Taylor."

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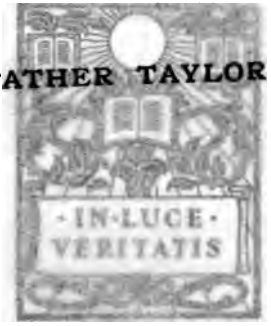

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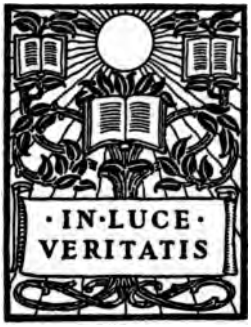

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Published October, 1906

To
the memory of
Father Taylor
and his "boys"

FATHER TAYLOR

I still remember on a May morning many years ago, going to a prayer meeting at the West Church in Boston in our Anniversary Week, where I saw Father Taylor, the seaman's chaplain, for the first time in my life. The meetings in those days were usually held in the Hollis Street Church, where I had gone the year before to wonder over our usage, so different from that of my mother church—the Methodist—which I had then but lately left. For there we would pray as the spirit moved us, or as we were moved by the leader when the tides of the spirit ran low; but in ours no one would pray except the Leader of the meeting and then the brethren would rise here and yonder and talk about prayer, so that in some moments I would wonder what was the use if this was "the conclusion of the whole matter."

Dr. Bartol had charge of the meeting in his own church and after the opening

services there was silence for a space, and then he spoke to a man well on in years who was sitting near him and who rose at once to his feet, when there was the rustle in the meeting of an eager expectation in those who were near me, while something like the breath which touches the leaves in a garden touched all the faces I could glance at. So I bent forward to listen when he began to speak in low, soft tones for some moments—as I caught his words—about Doves. He had seen them that morning as he came to the meeting, crowding to a window to be fed by a neighbor, and the sight had reminded him of the words of the prophet: "Who are these that fly as doves to the window?" And as he warmed to his theme his voice grew clear and presently the old church seemed to be full of doves. They came crowding in from the New England woods and the dovecotes at the North End,—doves of the prophets' time, and doves with the dew of that May morning on their wings, white

and purple and golden, out of the heavens and into the heavens,—and then somehow we were doves, come at the Father's call that morning to be fed from his hand, or longing to plume our wings to fly away and be at rest.

It was the enchantment to me of pure genius,—the spell cast over me by one who was spellbound in his vision—the prayer meeting of a lifetime—the pentecost of flying doves.

Dr. Bartol asked me to speak, I remember, after the man with the vision sat down. So I said some words that sounded like an echo many times removed. And I wist not who he was who had wrought the wonder, so I asked a man who sat near me and he answered, "Why, that's Father Taylor," with the wonder in his tone that any man in Boston should ask such a question. Then Dr. Bartol said he wanted to introduce me to him, and when this was done I held out my hand rather shyly, I guess, but he did not offer his in return: he opened his arms

wide and gave me a great brotherly hug. He also kissed me on the cheek,—quite a new experience. I had never been kissed by a man before, not even by my own father within my memory. And so it came to pass that we were fast friends from that morning to the end of his life on the earth. It made no difference that I was no longer a member of our mother church. I was a Unitarian, graft, he would say, on the Methodist stock, and this was a good variety when we ripened well.

This was Father Taylor, the waif, when we first hear of him, mothered by a poor woman in Richmond, Virginia. A cabin boy and man before the mast, a farm laborer for a spell, and shoemaker or, it may be, only a cobbler, a tin pedler, and a Methodist local preacher, then a preacher in full orders, and finally seamen's chaplain in the city of Boston. "Jeremy Taylor in butternut," Harriet Martineau said, and the only man this side the sea Charles Dickens went to hear

on his first visit to these states; the man who delighted Jenny Lind also, and Miss Bremer and Mrs. Jameson, among those who heard him from the old world; the man in whose large, sunny heart John A. Andrew loved to sun himself to the last, and whose face was so radiant in his home that his small daughter made up her mind this was what made the flowers open in their living-room.

Shall I try to touch his likeness as he stood in the West Church that May morning? A broad, thickset man, you could easily see he had been in his prime a man you would trace back to the lion if you were taken by the humor of seeing him through Darwin's glass. A man, with a great mane and gray eyes—the prophet's gray—with, I suspect, a gleam of red fire in them when his blood boiled, as it was rather apt to do, but always for good reason. A brow wide and ample, that knotted rather than knitted under the pressure of intense thought or overmastering emotion. A grand

jaw well set and well corded, and a mouth large and limber, equal to every demand in speech or sermon.

This was the lion, but then there was a lamb also that made good to you the prophet's vision of the good time coming when they shall lie down together, for, hot in his anger, he was gentle also as mothers are with their little children. Indeed he could be a mother in some sweet human sense, for once when he must take the services at a funeral in a poor home where the mother was left with a family of small children to fend for and he stood by the dust to pray, he was silent for some moments and then he moaned, "O God, *we* are a widow." I could not learn what words he said beside, and indeed these tell the story of the Christ-like heart which made the mother's sorrow his sorrow and her life his life. It is also told of him that when in some meeting a brother asked him to *make* a prayer he said, "I cannot *make* a prayer." Well, this I

think was not made by him, but through him.

Edward Taylor was born on Christmas day, 1793, at Richmond in Virginia, and into a forlorn world, for he could barely remember his father or mother; there was no tender care for his advent, or gold, frankincense, and myrrh from wise men who saw the star shining over the stable and the manger. This woman whose name we do not find gave him a home and raised him in some fashion in the earliest years, while one tradition remains to cast a curious gleam on the man and his election to the eminence he attained as "one called to be an apostle separated unto the gospel of God." For it was remembered how he would hold a funeral service when the opportunity came over a chicken he had killed with a stone, but having only negro children for mourners who would roll over and over in ecstacies of delight and laughter, he would trounce them to bring real tears and have a proper funeral.

But when he was about seven years old, as he was picking up chips one day for the woman who mothered him, the captain of a vessel passing by on the street said to him, "Come along with me, boy, and be a sailor." What he said beside we do not know: only that the boy let the chips drop he had gathered, ran to the woman who housed him and shouted, "Good-bye, mother, I am going to be a sailor." So he went to sea as a cabin boy, no doubt, to toss about on the great and wide ocean for ten years, enduring hardness as a good sailor; and then he comes into the light again in Boston and to a pregnant crisis and turning point in his life when he was seventeen years of age.

And this was the crisis. Wandering about the city on a Sunday morning he dropped by mere chance, as we are apt to say—where there is no chance in matters so momentous—into the Park Street Church, and was so taken by the sermon from Dr. Griffin we may presume that the hunger

touched him to be able some day to preach a sermon like that from the lips of the great divine.

On another Sunday he went to a Methodist meeting and heard Elijah Hedding, who afterward became an eminent bishop, —a man of a sunnier heart and a larger and sweeter gospel than that he heard in the Park Street Church. So while the first only went to the lad's head the second went to his heart, and then, before he left the meeting-house, something was done for him my mother church does best always when the pews work kindly with the pulpit,—one of the brethren spoke to him kindly, gave him his hand, and asked him to come again. The boy wanted human sympathy and here it was, warm from the good man's heart. It was probably the first tender word that had ever been said to him in his rough seaman's life. He asked him about his soul,—it is probable he was not aware until then that he had one. So he was converted in the good old Metho-

dist fashion of knowing you *are* converted. Methodism was his nursing mother and he loved her to the end of his life. And once when one of our ministers said some sour words about her ministry he rose in wrath and defied us to equal them, set foot to foot with ours, with a Bible in their hands, and a wilderness of human souls to save.

In the war with England in 1812 he went to sea on the *Black Hawk*, privateer. She was captured very soon by the enemy and her crew were sent prisoners to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Our young convert had attended a prayer meeting steadily after his conversion, when he came ashore, held in the house of a poor woman who had mothered the youth and cared for him in many ways; but she had lost her husband now and had gone to live in Halifax, where, having pity on our prisoners, she would go to help them by all the means in her power. So it fell out one day that going on her good errand, as she was passing a window, some one cried through the bars, "Mother, oh, *Mother!*"

It was Edward, her Boston boy, and she was to him as a mother indeed.

Then it came to pass that our sea dogs who were laid there by the heels broke out in rank rebellion against the prison chaplain, who would and must read the prayers to them for King George and the whole royal family to their great disgust, so they would not hear him. But finding young Taylor was "a praying man," they gave him orders to take the chaplain's place at the praying. He was quite ready to do this, and after some time it dawned on them that a fellow who was such a master hand at the praying would be just as good at the preaching, for they said it was only the difference between being on your knees or your feet. But here, as we say, they struck a snag: he did not know even his alphabet, so how could he find a text, and without a text how could he preach a sermon? The problem was solved easily. One man was a master hand at reading, so they found a Bible and he went to work

reading texts at haphazard, we may presume; and upon his reading the words, "A good and wise child is better than an old and foolish king," Taylor said, "That will do for a sermon," launched out into the story of our glorious Revolution, set them all afire, and came down heavily to their vast delight on the old and foolish king. So from this time he was their chaplain on a prisoner's ration while the other man drew the pay.

Coming home when the prison doors were opened, of course the young apostle could not hide the light and fire in him under a bushel, for that would have burnt the bushel; so he would speak in meet'n' and they began to hear of this strange creature who was stirring up the gift which was in him because he could not be silent,—this cross between a sailor and a saint,—and determined to give him a license as a local preacher if certain wise elders they sent to hear him should bring a good report. The tradition was that he must not be told

of their presence, but had been told by a friend they would be there and took for the text of his exhortation: "By the life of Pharaoh ye are spies."

Be this as it may, he was licensed to preach at nothing a year and find yourself,—the terms on which I preached through eleven happy years in my old mother church. And to find himself he hired out to a pedler in Ann street, Boston, who in his way became a co-worker together with the Most High by sending him down the coast with a load of tin notions. He struck Saugus in his journey, sold out his wares there, and then was moved to preach,—sold his tins, mark you, before he began to preach, not after,—and so won the heart of a fine old lady there that she offered him a home to work on her farm, and taught him to read the Bible so now there was no need to spell painfully or make a wild guess at the hard words, for it seems he had advanced so far already.

It fell out in due time that Amos Binney,

a rich and generous man in Boston, heard the young evangelist and determined that he should have a proper education for the ministry in the only school of the prophets Methodism possessed in those days. So he went in all good will, but only stayed in the school about six weeks. He wist not what was the matter, but the truth is he was one of the men who make good the poet's lines

> "The spirit which from God is made
> The noblest of its kind
> Asks not the help of rules that serve
> To guide the feebler mind."

And here was one of these spirits in possession of Edward Taylor.

But the mother was wise touching her strange son. So in no long time a full license was given him with the proper ordination, and he was sent to Marblehead to take charge of the infant church in that town. And it was in Marblehead he found

an angel to help and bless him through more than forty years. Deborah was the name of the maiden who was to sit, not under a palm-tree, but under a pine, and hold in her heart this nobler Barak. It was lovely beyond my telling to find them in their home some forty years after their wedding and to hear the old man's voice calling for "Mother" *Mother* from another room. It was a wonderful voice even then, harsh in scorn of meanness, but musical as Longfellow's when he would call for or talk to "Mother."

And Deborah might well win and hold such a man's love; she was "not like in like but like in difference," for gentleness was as heaven all about her and the peace of God that passeth understanding shone in her eyes. She was a woman all good men would love to call "mother" just for the beauty of the word and the grace. And so it would have been of no use Edward's saying on his part "for better or worse" when he took her for his wife and she took him for her husband, be-

cause there was no worse or could be: it was all and only for better.

And we may easily presume the only real trouble that ever came of their wedding was this, that when he was growing old and feeble she had to leave him for a little while, less I think than two years, for the other home and room in the many mansions in the Eternal City of God.

But we may be sure there were no cards sent out as invitations to the wedding, or orange blossoms, or whatever then might be the fashion, or a wedding march on the organ,—for indeed it might have been no wedding in any wise. For one day our young apostle, who was then abiding in Hingham, being vastly in love, as he was vastly every thing such a man may be, climbed to a hill top to have a look toward Marblehead across the gray waters and to blow great sighs over toward the granite cliffs. He had a telescope so that his eyes might help his heart, as he lay at length on the grass and talked to himself,

as he was fond of doing, with as it seems good reason. For when some one said to him once, "Father Taylor, why do you talk to yourself as you walk along the streets?" he answered, "Because I like to talk to a sensible man, sir." He was talking to himself when in a flash the thought struck him and he leaped to his feet with the cry, "Bless my heart, this is our wedding day and I forgot all about it!"

He had forgotten, and there he was all those miles away from Marblehead, where Deborah and the wedding guests were waiting. There was no telegraph or telephone or railroad train in 1819, and if there had been a wire he could hardly have sent a message to tell Deborah that he had clean forgotten this was their wedding day. But I warrant you the maiden's quiet, steadfast heart was not greatly disturbed. She would know if Edward ran he would only run one way; yet we should love to have a report of his journey next morning to Marblehead and how his genius rose

to the swift demand when he began to tell them how it was. Still, I think we can imagine how the man and maid foregathered and can dispense with the report.

Soon after the wedding our young apostle was sent to Duxbury to take charge of "the cause" there, or start one. Our church in Duxbury then was on the turn of the tide between the ancient puritan faith and the Unitarian. Dr. Allyn, who was and had been for many years in charge of our parish, was quite disposed to look down in disdain on this young interloper who had come to disturb the long-enduring slumber of his fine old church. And meeting him one day on the street he said: "So, young man, ye have come to preach in Duxbury, have ye?" "Yes," the young man answered, "the Lord bid us go forth and preach the gospel to every creature." "Yes, to be sure," the old man replied, "he bid us preach the gospel to every creature, but he never said every critter should preach the gospel, sir," and went his way in wrath.

His work down to 1828 lay close along the coast from the Cape to Bristol and it was done in his own way, man-fashion. He would say in the after years, "Like an Indian, I walk free, and he was neither to hold nor bind." He would preach as he was moved then as always, and when, well on in life, a friend said to him, "What are you going to preach about on Sunday, Father Taylor?" he answered promptly, "Don't know, don't want to forestall God." And as he preached, so he prayed. So it was remembered how at Barnstable one Sunday in the prayer he cried: "Lord, bless meek Burr and proud Pratt and save wicked old Alden." And when Parson Thaxter, who had been a soldier in the Revolution, was sadly put about because the young apostle was drawing his people away from the ancient church, told him a piece of his mind and raised his cane to strike him, but could not do it, the young man next Sunday prayed that every hair on the old man's venerable head might be hung

with a jewel of the Lord. There was no striking a man like young Taylor,—you might as soon raise your cane to strike one of Milton's angels.

Nor was it possible to have and hold him down there on the Cape, because here was a man who must find and fill his place in Boston. So about 1828 the good Methodists in the city felt a concern for those "who go down to the sea in ships." Here was a wilderness of souls no man seemed to care for and Edward Taylor was their chosen evangelist to do this momentous work. But his advent in the great city was not heralded by deftly pointed paragraphs in the papers; it was heralded in a way dear to the heart of the old Methodism by a flash from the inner heavens. A man of some note in the city, who had fallen on evil ways and was a scorner of the Most High, dreamed of a stranger who was coming to preach in Boston and was told to go and hear him. I do not make out that he was told *where* to go, but

on a Sunday morning he stumbled into the meeting-house in what was then Methodist Alley, saw young Taylor in the pulpit, and felt sure this was the man he was bidden to hear. The preacher won his heart, he came again and again, was finally converted, and from that time for twenty years lived a faithful and good life.

This was the advent of his work in Boston through more than forty years. The chapel presently became too small for him and was in peril also of being sold for the mortgage. But the Unitarians in the city had begun to take note of the high worth of his work among the sailors and turned in with a will to help him. Nathaniel Barret, a merchant in the city, wrote a hundred notes to a hundred men mainly of our faith calling them together, laid the matter before them, and it was resolved that a new meeting-house should be built for him, and this was done. The Bethel was built that still stands in North Square. And in her old age Mother Taylor would tell you "the

Unitarians were the best friends they had through all the years, giving money by thousands and thousands until the great boarding-house as well as the Bethel was entirely free from debt."

So this naturally drew Father Taylor into a close and warm friendship with the Unitarians in Boston, while to the end of his life he was a free-hearted and free-spoken Methodist. And it is down in the record that once when a brother Methodist minister who was not pleased over the free affiliation said to him, "Father Taylor, why do you fellowship so much with those Unitarians? If you need money we will give you all you need,"—he answered swiftly, "I shall not break with those Unitarians to please you, brother, or anybody; I cannot get along without them, but I can get along without you." He did not know his man. It was not the money he needed then, but the sweet and free fellowship of men like Ezra Gannett and Cyrus Bartol, James Freeman Clarke and many more I

cannot name. And again, when Lyman Beecher, the minister of the Park Street Church, said to him one day, "Taylor, are you cheating the Unitarians or are they cheating you?" he answered promptly, "Wrong, Doctor, on both counts. There is a third party in Boston bound to do the cheating, but I mention no names." The truth was, as Dr. Bartol finely says, "he walked at large and free." He knocked at every door, Orthodox, Episcopal, Roman, or Radical, and everywhere he was welcome. He had the freedom of the city.

He compared many of our religious troubles to two bands of turtles as he had watched them on the ship's deck when they would march up toward each other stretching out their necks, and the side that could stretch its neck the highest compelled the other party to retreat. His heart was great enough to hold us all, but none could own the head or heart of Father Taylor and leave the good and true of any name or denomination out in the cold.

He loved to come to our gatherings now and then, as he came on the morning when I saw and heard him the first time—that most memorable morning. But he would draw his bow on us and let fly his arrows, saying more than once that we might as well try to heat a furnace with snow-balls as to save men's souls in the way we went about our work. There was some truth in his criticism, but it was not the whole truth or true in any wise touching many men we can count in those far-away years. Father Taylor was working in one way and they in another, each good and essential, only the great hot heart in him could not tolerate what seemed to him to be like trying to grow wheat within, shall I say, the Arctic Circle. But, loving us, he loved us to the end. Men among our laymen like Amos Binney, Nathaniel Barret, Albert Fearing, and Governor Andrew, of his own generous pattern, were to him as sons and brothers. He had said to such men when they turned in to lend a hand

for his Bethel: "I do not want your arches and draperies and Corinthian columns for my Bethel; give me the shavings that drop from the pillars and I will be content." "Drop your gold into this ocean," he said again, "and it will cast a wave on the shores of Europe that will strike back to the islands of the South Seas, rebound to the north-west coast, make the circuit of the world, and roll back to the port of Boston." They heard and answered him with a good *Amen*, gave him his seaman's Bethel for a temple and a throne. But he was no petty kinglet to be maintained on his throne by the great guns of Boston. For when they would crowd his Bethel on a Sunday so that his sailor men could not find a seat, he would say to some man: "You must stand, sir. Jack must have a seat." So Jack saw the point and sat on his dignity. Here was the place where Jack was better than his master. He knew what he was about when he ran out the ancient chaplain of the prison in Halifax who said the wrong

prayers, and elected the young praying man, saying to him, "If you can pray like that you can preach too; it is only a question of talking on your knees or your feet." So the sailors loved him, honored and followed him. The Bethel was his temple and Father Taylor his supreme pontiff. The story is true in the spirit if we cannot vouch for the letter, of two sailors who wanted to find the temple one Sunday morning, but, not sure of their bearings, on their arrival there the one who could read or perhaps spell saw the name of the place over the door and slowly went through his work: "'B-e-t,' that's *beat;* 'h-e-l,' that's *hell;* all right, Jack, come along, this is where the old man beats hell, let's go right in."

And what a throne of power for good it was! Writing no word of his sermon as a rule, though he took good heed to his preparation while still he must not forestall God, the grand thoughts came flying on the wings of the great moments. Yet

there were times again when it was like dropping buckets into empty wells. One morning he touched the theme in his sermon, always so near his heart, of a young man coming to the great city from a sweet country home and nurture,—a young man full of noble resolutions and aspirations falling away from one temptation into another, but always down, down, *down.* He paused when he had touched the picture with the last dark shadows, lifted his hand, and whispered: "Hush-h-h-h, he is cursing his mother—shut the windows of heaven, *shut* the windows."

Jenny Lind went one Sunday morning to hear him. I am not sure he knew she was there. He was preaching on amusements and paid a glowing tribute to "the sweetest singer that ever alighted on our shores" and to her modesty and charity. The sweet singer was leaning forward listening in delight, when a very tall man sitting on the pulpit stairs rose up slowly. When Father Taylor had come to the close

of his eulogy the stranger wanted to know whether a person who died at one of Jenny Lind's concerts would go to heaven. The old man glared at him some moments—not many—and then said: "A good man will go to heaven, sir, die where he may, and a fool will be a fool wherever he lives, though he sits on my pulpit stairs."

And being the man he was, Father Taylor could not take kindly to those who, being as he insisted the Lord's stewards, kept both the accounts and the income and said it "would need more grace to save such men than it would take skim milk to fat an elephant." "Some people of this brand," he said again, "may think they are saints, but if they could see themselves as the just in heaven see them they would not dare to look a decent devil in the face."

The story is told of an eminent minister in England that when his church presented him with a fine sum of money, after many years of good service, on the day of his golden wedding, he turned to his wife and said:

"My dear, that is yours, not mine. You have taken care of the purse all these years, and the home and the children and of me; so you must take care of this also." This was what Mother Taylor did through all the years, and she had to care especially for the home; and of the very soul of generosity, the prodigal father, she had to be watchful, wary, and wise, and even then she was not always able to "make ends meet."

Father Taylor had the habit a good woman and housewife can never quite put up with, of bringing any number of friends home to take pot-luck, while for many a year the pot was not full to overflowing for chance and hungry guests of this sort. One day among many such he rushed in crying that so many men were coming to dinner that day. It was quite a party of ministers. So Mother gave him the money to rush out again and get the provision. He came back presently with a long face and said, "Mother, you must go and buy

the dinner. I met such a man, he was in great distress, so I gave him the ten dollars." On another day Mother sent him out to pay a bill with fifty dollars in his keeping. He came back after a while and said: "Mother, I met such a man on the street; he is a poor, old, broken-down minister, you know. He did not beg, but I wanted to help him and I could not for shame ask him to change a bill for fifty dollars, when he was not worth fifty cents, I am sure; so I gave him the bill."

He greatly liked chicken prepared in Mother's way, and with her own hands she always made the dish and had it ready when he came home from the watch-night meeting on the turn of the new year's morning. And when they were far on in years, on the watch-night she prepared the dish ready for him and the friends he would bring to the feast—a great and ample preparation. But as he came home from the meeting some one told him of a poor family at the North End in great destitu-

tion. "Where are they?" he cried, found where they were housed, rushed home, found the dear good dish of chicken ready on the table for the supper, and took it in his hands to the poor place. Some members of his own household followed him and when they arrived, there were the famishing children dancing in wonder and delight over the feast set on some apology for a table. Mother had to get Father and the friends another supper; but this was no grief,—she knew her man and had long ago turned her cross, if these things were a cross, into a crown.

Father Taylor was in his fair, full prime in the times I have glanced at and strong both for fighting and fending. His life and the work he must do lay mainly in Boston in his Bethel and his Sailors' Home, while he also made three journeys over sea to the Old World. He went over the first time when his Bethel was building, and again in 1842 when he was quite worn out with the intense labor of three services on

the Sunday, no end of meetings in the week, the oversight and care of his Sailors' Home, and the perpetual calls of all kinds he must answer that allowed him no rest. He went to the Holy Land on his second journey and told me once, with a vast enjoyment of the humor, how in crossing the desert they came one morning to a place where they must halt for breakfast and must leave their luggage in one tent by order of the chief and take their breakfast in another at some distance. But there was an Englishman in the company who did not want to leave his luggage at the mercy of the Bedoween, and when the company went forward he stayed by the stuff to the wonder of the chief who had charge of the escort and the stuff. He stood for some moments wondering what was the matter, and when the light broke on his mind he said with a smile to the man: "Do not be afraid, your things will not be stolen, they are quite safe; there is not a 'Christian' within fifteen leagues

of the tent." So the Englishman went to his breakfast in great content.

His last journey over sea was in the *Macedonian*, the good ship sent from Boston to Ireland loaded with provision in the black year of the potato famine. They made him chaplain of the holy mission and saw that he had quite a splendid personal outfit; but when he returned home he had barely the clothing to keep him decent and warm. He had given all he had, piece by piece, to the poor creatures, but they had given him a fine bundle of canes—blackthorns—and two Irish terriers. These dogs, he said, were just what he wanted, for Mother now would never be troubled any more with rats.

These journeys, with another to the West and South, are blended with the years I have touched of his life in Boston. He would say to his intimate friends in his tired moments, "I do not wear out, I tear out." So when I first met him he seemed older than the account of the years. The

hard work had told on him, but when the holy fires burned they still burned white.

He said when he was well on in years that he had never seen an unhappy day, and when he went abroad on his last voyage and was parting with the hosts of friends he said, "Laugh till I come back." Listening to a gloomy sermon one day he said: "That man preaches as if he had killed somebody." But as the years stole on there were times when he did not take kindly to the thought of dying, leaving his home, his Bethel, and his boys, as he would call the sailors. And one day in this dolor a good sister of his faith, thinking to comfort him, said: "Bless the Lord, Father Taylor, there is rest in heaven and you will soon be there"; but he growled in reply: "Go there yourself if you want to, I want to stay here." "But think of the angels all waiting to welcome you," and he growled again: "I don't want angels, I want folks." And then in an instant the old radiance flashed out and he said, "Angels are folks

too." And this gave him comfort, as well it might, for he wanted what I think we all long for, a human heaven where the angels are folks too and ours are among them.

Yet now and then in his weakness and pain they would hear him moan: "Lord, what am I here for,—I am of no use. The love of my friends will soon be gone, and my love for them. Now, Lord, some summer morning soon, snatch me home to thyself." The last time I saw him in his home he was on the far verge of time, but was bright and cheery as a boy between the spasms of labor and pain. And I still remember, after a strain that made the cords start, when he recovered he whispered to me, "The old hull's breaking up; it has taken a good deal to break her, but she's going. I feel her start through all her timbers when these fits come on." Then something,—I do not quite remember,—some bit of humor between ourselves, I think, caught the old man and he shook all over with

silent laughter. Father Taylor could laugh louder and make no sound than most men who make the welkin ring. It was laughter incarnate. Then he kissed me good-bye and I saw him in this world no more.

We hear of only one incident after this that may be mentioned and must be. He had fallen into the way when the tides ran low of looking into the glass and talking to his shadow there. He would tell it he was an old sinner and would go to hell after all. And one night when he was very low the humor took him to have it out with his double. A young minister was with him, and to help the poor old man in this dolor he began to pray for him as he would for such a sinner who must repent before it was too late. But when the young brother rose from his knees the old lion roared,—and I imagine his genius never flamed out into a finer fire than in those moments when he came back out of the valley and shadow of death to reveal to the young man what the deeper heart al-

ways holds in sacred trust, that I can say that about myself to the Most High which I will permit no man to say about me even on the far verge of life and time.

He died on the 6th of April, 1871, and went out with the tide, as his sailor boys loved to remember,—and I think the last memory recorded is that he doubled his fist, or tried to double it, at his nurse because he insisted on dying in one position when the nurse would fain have him lay more at ease.

Shall I turn now from this rapid glance at Father Taylor's life to touch his rare and unique genius? I think there can be no mistake about this, first of all, that he was the one man in all the world for the place which he was called and elected from on high to fill. Here was the port of Boston swarming in those days with sailors, simple almost as children in so many ways, but with the pent-up passions of strong men when they came ashore

that exposed them to fearful temptations, beset as they were then by evil men and women who sought to devour them.

And here was a city full of churches to overflowing and ministers of the first eminence. Yet no man of the whole number could take hold of the sailors man-fashion, save them from the perils, and set them, as we were used to say, with their faces toward Zion. Dr. Channing was preaching those wonderful sermons that are still "the word of life," in the Federal Street Church. He was and is still our great apostle; but we may well doubt whether any sermon from his lips ever reached one man before the mast and won him to be Christ's man. And the lurid fires kindled by Lyman Beecher flamed up on Park Street Corner, but Jack would grin if he ever heard of them and go to a hell of his own at the North End.

The great schools of the prophets also were turning out ministers by scores or hundreds, all told, but they might about

as well have been trained in Mars for any good they would be or do to Jack. And I think a rude sailor man Father Taylor came across in a foreign port on one of his journeys over sea touched the quick heart of the question from the sailor's standpoint when he said to our chaplain: "You seems to be a good old chap who knows what's what; so I will tell you what I likes along o' preachin'. When a man is a-preachin' at me I want him to take somert hot out of his heart and shove it into mine, —that's what I calls preachin'."

Well, this was the one sure way to win the sailors in the port of Boston and Father Taylor was the one man to win them, because he had not alone something hot out of his heart to win them,—he had the fire as from the sun which gives life to all things and, himself a sailor, he held the key to the sailor's heart and knew the wards and windings. He was, as Edward Everett once finely said, "a walking Bethel." In his great moments he could make his sailors

feel the ship alive under them as he stood on his quarter deck, and the saltness of the sea; could raise the storm and create such peril by his magic that there were times when the old salts would lose track of Sunday in the Bethel, shout "long boat, *long boat,*" and be ready to cast her loose. Then he would turn his vision on the instant into their souls' peril and cry out to them to be saved. He could do this as no other man could, while still he had the deep-hearted, whole love for the men he would win, which is the mother-milk of all true preaching. He could say stern things to them when he must, as a father may to his children, but no other man must say them to his boys in his presence and in his Bethel. So when a man one day deplored their ignorance he turned on him and said: "Jack knows more than you do; he holds the whole world in his hand as you hold an orange." And when one of his boys in the meeting once told them what trouble he had gone through fighting the devil, he said: "All

right, Jack, that shows you are worth tempting or he would let you alone; he does not care for chaff." A gentleman from Beacon street made a speech one Sunday in his meeting full of a fine condescension and told the sailors how grateful they should be to the merchants of Boston in building the Bethel and much more of the same tenor. When his eminence sat down the old man rose in quite a temper and cried, "Is there another old sinner from uptown who wants to talk? Now's his chance, before we go on with the meeting."

He called them his boys, his sons, lumps of amber saved from the ocean, and held them fast to his Bethel and his heart. But he was in what might have been in another man a very bad temper when the Baptists won away from him about thirty of his boys. This was a sort of religious larceny he could not abide. The Baptists, as the report stands, baptized the new converts forthwith; but it was bitter weather when they were to be immersed and as they

would not be immersed through the ice Father Taylor heard they had warmed the water to the temper required. He met one of his estrays soon after the baptism and said to him sternly: "Why did you leave your Bethel, sir?" "Why, you see, Father," the poor fellow answered with a stammer, "I—didn't—feel—safe—unless I went down—into—the Jordan." "Down into the Jordan," Father Taylor growled, "b'iled—Jordan, *b'iled!*"

But it was not to be imagined by the chaplain that these wild men of the sea would answer to such services and sermons in the Bethel as were current then in Boston, even with Father Taylor for their preacher. And here again the man's native genius, touched with the divine fire, rose to the demand. For as a rule it was not so much monologue as dialogue that formed the staple of his ministry in most of the meetings, and, captain of the Bethel as he was always, he gave his hearers of the sailor men the priceless privilege of

talking in meeting, asking questions or answering, as the mood might take them. He commended, encouraged, or rebuked them, holding them always in his heart. So when one of the sailors shouted to his fellows, "The devil told me I was good enough, but I heaved him overboard stock and fluke," he was delighted by the figure and cried, "Well done, Jack, that's salvation set to music." And when another said, "I think faith is suth'n' like tinder: shut it up and it will go out, but give it vent and it will burn," he cried, "Well done, Peter, the Bishop of England could do no better than that."

When Father Taylor was preaching on the parable of the wedding garment and pictured the wedding guests crowding to the supper in their brave attire beautiful to see, while those who had no garments to honor the feast were turned away, one poor fellow in shirt sleeves, entranced by the spell, and feeling that his chances at the wedding supper were slipping away, started

to his feet in great dolor and cried: "I ain't to blame, don't leave me out, I lost every thing I had in the wreck of my vessel on the coast and had to come here with no jacket." So perfect was the picture and real to the "boys" that a score of jackets were stripped in a score of seconds, while they shouted, "Take mine, take mine, and mine." And Father Taylor ran up to him with the tears running down his furrowed face, put his arms about his boy, and cried, "Why, Jack, I would not have left you out for the world if I had known you had been wrecked. You won't think hard of me, will you?"

When a Negro told his simple and pathetic experience in one of these fellowship meetings and touched the fount of the old man's tears, he let them fall freely, saying, "There's rain in that cloud." And when one of his sailors with a fine red head from Cape Cod related his experience in words that went to the chaplain's heart, he remarked: "I did not know

the soil down there on the Cape grew such good red Cedar." But when another man who could pump up tears in quantities rose to his feet in the meeting and began to call himself names and rain down the tears, the chaplain, who knew him down to the ground, said quietly, "Cry away, you white-headed old sinner, summer showers soon dry up; you'll forget all about it in half an hour."

When sailor Wood, again, was talking to no purpose except to damp down the fires, he cried suddenly, "Lord, set a fire to that Wood." And if one left the Bethel in mid meeting he would say, "Jack has got all he can take care of" or, "A light craft floats quick." It is told that once when he got tangled up in his speech he cried, "I have lost the nominative case,"—or whatever it might be,—"but I'm on my way to glory." One feels a little dubious about this, however, because from all we can learn his grammar was an instinct and not of the schools—as John Bright's was.

So if he lost a point he would make one, and a better. He was impatient of all dulness; *that* to his eager instinct meant deadness. And when another lost his way in an attempt to speak, but still went maundering on, he cried, "Lord, give him the point." When another had taken great pains to liken religion to a chest of medicines, but was making no headway, he cried, "Do get that chest open, Jack, and give us a dose."

Still he was very tender and sweet toward those who were trying to utter what lay in their heart, to bud forth into speech, when he felt they were sincere. One day a man of foreign birth, a Jew, was moved to speak. He took the Psalms when his speech was ended and began to recite them in a polyglott of Hebrew and other tongues, at which the sailors broke into loud laughter. But the chaplain turned on them and said, "That's pure Hebrew; don't *you* know Hebrew?" And when a Portuguese sailor, when the fervor had risen to white heat

in one of the fellowship meetings, shouted, "If a man tell me I don't love my Jesus I hit dat man 'tween da eyes," he did not rebuke the man, but shook with the silent laughter. The poor fellow's sincerity in the stress of the moment was so clear and his meaning so good in despite of the poverty of his speech that there was no room for rebuke.

Father Taylor was the very primate of wholesome laughter, but could not tolerate the laughter of fools that is "as the crackling of thorns under a pot." He would turn on his boys then and ask them if they thought they would laugh in hell. He did not take stock in the Millerite craze when it rose to fever heat in our older states about sixty years ago. He saw the danger at once and hoisted the signals. But the believers gave him great trouble; they would come to his meetings and insist on the freedom of speech Father Taylor loved to maintain. One day a fervent believer came with the usual burden of the beasts

and numbers. He was full of his gospel and spoke with great fervor. When he sat down Father Taylor did not speak, but one of the sailors rose and said, "I've heeard a many of you fellers, time and time, but I only mind one who was as full of it as you be, and he just cut his bootstraps and went right up." That broke the old chaplain down. Once a man came to his meeting and insisted on speaking out of his turn and time. No man could do this. Father Taylor was captain of his Bethel and would keep order in his crew. But, still insisting, the man said: "I must speak because the Holy Ghost has sent me." "Then go back," the chaplain said, "and tell your holy ghost I would not let you speak here to-day at all."

"Lord, deliver us from stale bread," he cried once, when a brother on his mission came to the Bethel and told the sailors a lot of dreary stories from the religious tracts of that time. And when another in an exhortation told them of a man who had led

an evil life through many years, was blown up in a powder-mill, came down with only a moment to live, but in that moment gave his heart to God, was saved, and went right to heaven, Father Taylor was aroused to a white heat and cried in his wrath: "I don't want my men to hear such trash as that in my Bethel. I tell you, boys, no man can calculate on serving the devil all his life and then cheating him with his last breath. Don't burn the candle down to the end in sin and then give God the snuff. Our brother has told you about a man in the Bible who said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his': that was Balaam and he was about the meanest man you can find there. Let's hear no more about either Balaam or his ass. Why, boys," he concluded finally, "you cannot even calculate on being blown up in a powder-mill, anyhow,—and then where will you be?"

This in outline was Father Taylor, the

seaman's chaplain, who could speak to every man in his own tongue on the days when the fire came down from heaven in the likeness of a dove as in the day of the Pentecost; who loved his "boys" with a great devouring love, and having loved them as the Scripture says, loved them to the end; called them lumps of amber thrown ashore in the storm, or pearls fished from the ocean; who could compel them to smiles and tears in a breath and yet never seemed to know how it was done; who could not tolerate a religion that made you less a man on the dead watch or in a mighty storm face to face and eye to eye with death; who insisted that good steel *should* strike fire when the need came,—only and always it must be holy fire,—and would tell us roundly, seamen or landsmen, that putty was of no use in the man he would win. And when he went to Niagara, where of course they got him to make a few remarks, he said: "Niagara is like the Gospel I love: it never freezes up in the

winter, never dries up in the dog-days, and you never come to it for water and go away with an empty bucket."

They loved him, I said, as few men have been loved among the ministers in Boston of any name, and flocked to his Bethel from all the seas to hear his word and feel the beat of his heart. And he drew his own portrait when he said: "I am no man's model, no man's copy, no man's agent; I go on my own hook and say what I please." We have heard what he said when he was to leave his sailors for a time, but this was not all. His heart was greatly moved and much cast down as he prayed over his sons, as he called them, in great dolor for some time. But then the great heart leaped up with a bound and he cried: "What am I doing? I am distrusting heaven, I am not believing that our God who gives the great whale a ton of herrings for his breakfast can take care of my boys while I am away." So the prayer ended with a psalm that had opened with a dirge.

Still more than this was demanded from our man of pure religious genius dedicated to the most high and planted in the very centre of the intellectual, moral, and religious life of the nation all those years ago, and that was Father Taylor's mission to Boston as well as to the sailors. For, strange as it may seem now, Boston needed a man and missionary who would not and could not be an echo of Channing or Lyman Beecher, but could fight for his own hand like Harry Wynd the smith in the great story, and put the truth he would tell into words that went right home like the arrows from the bow of the Conqueror no other man could draw. So he said to a minister who had insisted in a sermon on the fearful dogma of infant damnation: "It's of no use, brother, preaching sermons like that, because if what you say could be true your God would be my Devil." And to another who had insisted that the elect alone can be saved while the non-elect, no matter what they do, will be lost, he

said: "To invite or exhort men to repent on those terms is like inviting a lot of gravestones home to dinner." And to another who was preaching on the same theme he said: "Brother, when did you hear from Jesus Christ?" Again, when the question was mooted in a conference whether the children of those who did not belong to any church should be baptized, he took a little child in his arms and cried, "Why, if the devil himself should bring me a child like this to baptize I would do it. I would say, 'Now, devil, you go where you belong, and here, you angels, take the baby, he belongs to you.'" "Creeds," he said again, "are like Joseph's coat of many colors. They are all made of patches. No two of them are alike, and none of them are like what they were when they were made. No man shall make a creed for me and I will make one for no man living."

He would have no doors on his pulpit, as was then the fashion. And when a brother one Sunday refused his invitation

to enter his pulpit and sit there because Henry Ware, an eminent minister of the Unitarian faith had sat there the Sunday before, he cried, "Lord, there are two things we need to be delivered from in Boston,—bad rum and bigotry. Which is the worst Thou knowest, I don't. Amen." He held on to one grand truth and cast it into rhyme that rings like the rhymes of old Bunyan.

"My soul can see no God in heaven above
Who does not show himself a God of love."

He shot his arrows right and left, but still he loved good men and true of every name and denomination. My own old friend Dr. Neale the Baptist was his dear friend also, and Father Haskin of the Catholics; and he nourished more than a brother's love for Dr. Bartol, in whose church I saw and heard him for the first time on that memorable May morning, the pentecost of the doves. Emerson also was his lifelong friend, who lived to see himself canonized,

but was far from this in the earlier years. Father Taylor, dear friends as they were, was greatly bewildered by the new transcendentalism, so far away from his own genius and yet shall we not say so near. But he loved the man with a heart-whole love, while he berated his teaching. He said: "Emerson, I think, is the sweetest soul God ever made, but he knows no more about theology than Balaam's ass knew about Hebrew grammar." Still he held that if the devil got him he would not know what to do with him. "There seems to be a screw loose in him somewhere," he said again, "but I never could find it, and listen as I may I can find no jar in the machinery." And he struck the climax, I think, of his many sayings when some one said in his hearing that he feared Emerson would go to hell. "Go there," he cried, shaking his mane. "Why if he went there he would change the climate and the tide of emigration would turn that way." He once said to our great apostle Channing: "When you die the

angels will contend for the honor of carrying you to heaven on their shoulders."

In his own city as a citizen Father Taylor also swung free, courting no man's smile, fearing no man's frown. In a prayer for President Lincoln he cried: "Lord, save him from those piercing, wriggling, slimy, boring keel worms. Don't let them bore through the sheathing of his integrity." And once when he read the Proclamation for the Thanksgiving and came to the prayer 'God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,' he added, "He did that last Tuesday." His love for Webster was like worship. But when the great light paled and gave forth only smoke in the last days, he said: "Webster is too bad to trust with any thing very good now, and too good to throw away; he is the best bad man I ever knew."

This was Father Taylor so far as I can touch the story of his life and his genius as it touched the heart of Boston, who

adopted him as her beloved son. Other men were greater in other ways, but I think he had no equal in this winged wit that went home,—this force as of a rifle-ball at short range. He had his limitations, but was so sincere and so right where the fastness of all rightness dwells,—in a man's soul,—and was Father Taylor

> "who never sold the truth to serve the hour
> Or paltered with Eternal God for power."

No life, when we consider his environments, could well be more perilous than this of Father Taylor, or more desolate in the earlier years. And when he came to himself he not only used his noble gifts nobly but gave himself with them a living sacrifice for the men who go down to the sea in ships first, and then to help all around. He squandered nothing on Edward Taylor and did not ask, What is pleasant or, What will "pay," but, What shall I do to work the work of Him that sent me. He wanted nothing for himself and so *all* things were given him his heart could

desire,—honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,—the sorrow of a great city and sorrow on the sea when he died.

A waif in Virginia; a youth "roughing it" on the ocean; the temptations of a young sailor's life when he came ashore; unable to read when he was eighteen; privateersman, prisoner, and whatever he must be beside in the years of his preparation; working ahead always and never falling back, and winning his way to this noble eminence, not by his genius alone, for that might have cursed him, but by his conduct and character and the help which is in us all if we will use it to look higher than our mortal eyes and listen for diviner words than ever fall on our mortal ears,—make *center*stances by the help of the Most High stronger than *circum*stances,—make our life noble as he did, and win the good 'Well done.'

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